

2006 Workforce Development Committee Annual Report

During 2006, Health Care Workforce Development and partners recorded some of the great successes in achieving milestones. Collaboration and major developments within the Benton-Franklin community have resulted in long-term solutions for providing increased training, fulfilling workforce needs and having sufficient space for current and future workforce development needs.

The most recent community survey of workforce needs was conducted in 2004. Forty-seven healthcare employers within the community identified approximately 100 nurses needed annually for the next five years. As of this year, the workforce preparation of Washington State University and Columbia Basin College will reach approximately 90 graduates, nearly fulfilling the gap identified by the survey. Other needs identified included licensed practical nurses, medical assistants, nursing assistants, imaging technicians, medical technologists, coders, medical secretaries and phlebotomists. To date, significant progress has been made on the majority of the workforce needs identified by the survey. Additional details have been provided in the following paragraphs.

Washington State University has expanded their nursing enrollment in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program to support approximately 40 graduates per year. Through funding with a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant, WSU has increased the enrollment of nursing programs located at Yakima, Walla Walla and Tri-Cities. The grant focus is to improve the diversity of nursing students while increasing the capacity to meet employer needs. Additionally, Washington State University provides flexible options to students who are pursuing their BSN on-line and existing Associate Degree Nurses to complete their bachelor degree through the bachelor degree completion program.

Columbia Basin College has also maintained an annual graduation rate of approximately 50 students from the Associate Degree Nursing Program (ADN). Consistent with the history of CBC's ADN students, the majority of them stay within the community for their working careers. Many students enrolled in the ADN program also achieve their practical nursing license after the first year of the associate degree program. These students fulfill workforce needs for LPN's while they are pursuing the ADN completion and registered nurse license.

An important beginning part of the healthcare career ladder is to provide sufficient opportunities for students to achieve Nursing Assistant Certified licensure. Throughout 2006, Columbia Basin College has maintained a significant enrollment increase in Nursing Assistant courses. Additionally, CBC provides the testing laboratory and facilities necessary for students to complete their certification testing.

A new Medical Assistant training program has provided opportunities for students to enter the outpatient healthcare setting. Students completion the Medical Assistant program have been able to find work throughout the community and help ease the workforce needs within the outpatient network. Columbia Basin College is currently conducting the necessary accreditation steps to achieve a fully accredited Medical Assistant program allowing students to become Certified Medical Assistants at the completion of the program. Additional work needs to be done throughout the community to increase the awareness of Medical Assistants, issues surrounding licensure as well as the scope and practice capabilities of Medical Assistants.

Another major accomplishment in 2006 has been the successful offering of the Radiologic Technology degree program at Columbia Basin College. The first graduating class will finish June, 2008. Training facilities are currently under construction at the Health Science Center. Through the support of Kennewick General Hospital, students have been able to use x-ray facilities at the KGH Medical Mall while the training facilities are being completed for their dedicated use at the Health Science Center. Diagnostic Ultrasound and other medical imaging modalities are currently being developed through the support of the Department of Labor grant received by Columbia Basin College.

Other ancillary healthcare support services have also benefited by improved workforce preparation. Columbia Basin College initiated a Health Information Technology program in 2006 and has a dedicated tenure-track faculty member for providing the majority of the course needed to support the medical office. Training for these support roles in healthcare is available in a variety of modalities, including traditional classroom training and internet training to help meet the flexible learning needs of students.

Columbia Basin College also implemented a national background check process for clinical students. This background check process allows students to provide employers or multiple schools with their background check results. The national background check was implemented as a result of needs expressed by the clinical community.

Finally, the community has benefited by the completion of the Health Science Center (HSC) at the Columbia Basin College Richland Campus. The HSC provides state of the art training facilities for nurses, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, phlebotomists, radiologic technologists, and other healthcare workforce programs. The HSC provides 66,000 square feet of dedicated training space for improving the Benton-Franklin healthcare workforce. The facility was made possible by funding through the State of Washington, Kadlec Medical Center, CBC Foundation and private donors. The facility has been equipped with \$500,000 of the latest training equipment through federal funding as well.

Goals and Activities for 2007

- Increase the supply of licensed pharmacists, pharmacy residents, and other pharmacy ancillary support staff.
- Increase the supply of physical therapists and occupational therapists throughout the community.
- Provide improved access to medical technologists.
- Improve the enrollment in graduate nursing programs to promote increased leadership within the nursing workforce. Find additional innovative and cost-effective ways to provide students local training options by importing degree programs to our community.